



March 28, 2022

Dear Member of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Po Murray and I have been leading the Newtown Action Alliance (NAA) since my 20-year-old neighbor killed 20 children and six educators with weapons of war in Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14, 2012. For over nine years, NAA has been working to build a coalition with families and survivors who are directly impacted by gun violence from all corners of America --- to help end all forms of gun violence in our nation.

NAA is a proud member *of the Connecticut Initiative to Prevent Community Gun Violence* and we urge you to support Senator Marilyn Moore's bill, [SB-477, An Act Concerning The Public Health Of Residents Of The State](#), that includes five key components of [HB-5397, An Act Declaring Gun Violence a Public Health Crisis and Establishing the Office of Gun Violence Prevention](#).

- Declaring that gun violence in Connecticut is a public health crisis, to bring it the attention it needs.
- Housing the solution in the Department of Public Health where it can have the greatest impact.
- Establishing an Advisory Council with voices of those impacted by community gun violence, and other stakeholders, to ensure accountability.
- Including a robust data gathering and research capacity to drive evidence-informed grant-making.
- Appropriating funding commensurate to the magnitude of the crisis, starting with \$5 million in fiscal 2023 for operating expenses and grant-making.

Gun violence is a public health emergency. Since the Sandy Hook tragedy, approximately one million Americans have been killed or injured by guns. Gun deaths have surged over the years. There were approximately 33,000 annual gun deaths in 2012 and last year, there were 45,000. The pandemic gun sales surge due to panic gun buying has contributed to increased gun violence across the nation. Guns are now the leading cause of death for American children and teens (age 0-19).

[www.NewtownAction.org](http://www.NewtownAction.org)  
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Interpersonal gun violence has devastated too many families in Connecticut. In 2020, there were 157 homicides and guns were used in the vast majority of these murders. Communities of color are disproportionately impacted by gun violence in Connecticut. Only 10% of Connecticut's population is Black however approximately 56% of the state's gun homicide victims were Black.

Gun violence costs Americans \$280 Billion a year and Newtown fully understands the human and financial cost of gun violence. Newtown received over \$60 million of federal and state dollars to build a new school and to provide mental health services while communities like Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport, did not. Gun violence costs Connecticut \$1.4 billion each year, of which \$60.4 million is paid by taxpayers.

Newtown Action Alliance is a proud member of the Invest in Us Coalition led by Community Justice Action Fund. We have been pushing President Joe Biden and Members of Congress to prioritize federal investments for community violence intervention (CVI) programs. While we wait for Congress to approve additional federal dollars for CVI programs, we strongly urge all members of the Connecticut General Assembly to support SB-477/HB-5397.

As a member of the Time is Now Coalition, we have also been urging President Biden and Congress to establish a Federal Office of Gun Violence Prevention and appoint a Director who should spend 100% of his/her time coordinating all the efforts to end the gun violence crisis. The Connecticut Office of Gun Violence Prevention is needed to coordinate with the federal government to ensure that the grant-making process is fair, equitable, organized, and helpful for the CVI organizations.

Colorado, Washington, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Washington D.C, NYC, Oakland, and New Orleans have declared gun violence a public health crisis and they have already established their offices of gun violence prevention. We hope to see Connecticut, other states and major cities do the same.

The Connecticut General Assembly led the nation by passing the second strongest lifesaving bipartisan gun laws after Sandy Hook and we urge you to lead once again by supporting evidenced-based community violence intervention programs to save lives in the communities that are most impacted by gun violence in Connecticut.

Thank you so much for your consideration.

Best Regards,  
Po Murray  
Chairwoman, Newtown Action Alliance

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